

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 7: COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Introduction to Evangelism. This series of lessons aims to prepare participants to effectively share the Gospel with others. Understanding how God equips us for ministry and how to prepare our Gospel message for various worldviews will help us bring the unchanging message of the hope found in Jesus Christ to a world that does not yet know Him.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.



INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 7: COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Our work of sharing the Gospel is only as good as our ability to communicate. This lesson will help you see the factors that produce effective communication by looking at the example of the Apostle Paul.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

A good presentation of the Gospel isn't just about great language skills and a charming personality! It is about connecting with your audience to ensure comprehension, and crafting a presentation that the audience can understand. We can all work on our communication skills. Communication involves more than speaking – it is also paying attention, listening, and responding in ways that are relevant. In this lesson we will look at some ways the Apostle Paul optimized His message with effective communication.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you had the experience of someone trying to communicate with you, but you had difficulty understanding the message? It could be something as simple as asking directions. What barriers were there in the communication?

2. How many languages do you speak? Have you tried to learn a language not taught in your youth? If so, what were the difficulties you faced?



STUDY

❖ **JESUS' EXAMPLE:** Jesus is the ultimate master of communication! We see many examples of Jesus using different methods to communicate with people.

- For instance, Jesus was an audience-sensitive communicator. Consider Mark 4:33: “With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.” Jesus was careful to give listeners only as much as they could understand.
- Jesus was patient and creative in presenting His message. He was focussed on His audience, and readily interacted with his listeners on a personal level.
- Jesus used stories, familiar phrases, repetition, questions and answers, and many other forms of teaching beyond just giving them facts.
- If you are familiar with Jesus’ teaching style, what else do we note about His method of communication? What can we learn from Him?

❖ **PAUL'S EXAMPLE:** Paul and his companions took notice of cultural barriers when sharing the Gospel message, and encountered several situations that required an understanding of their audience. Even Paul was not effective 100% of the time! We will look together at several examples and see what we can learn from them.

- **Paul and Barnabas at Lystra.** Read Acts 14:8-18.
 - The audience was Greek – Polytheists who believed in the Olympian gods.
 - Paul’s strategy was to work a miracle that demonstrated the power of God and the supremacy of God over their idols.
 - What was the result of this? What could Paul and Barnabas have done to prevent this misunderstanding?



➤ **Paul at Athens.** Read Acts 17:16-34.

- The audience was Greek – educated philosophers. They met regularly in this place to debate philosophy. They would have been well-versed in Greek poetry and theatre, including both religious and secular ideas.
- How did Paul adapt his message to this audience? What was the result of his communication?

➤ **Paul at Thessalonica.** Read Acts 17:1-4.

- The audience included Jews and some devout Greeks in a synagogue where the Old Testament Scriptures were regularly taught.
- How did Paul deliver his message in a synagogue of non-Christian Jews? They were lacking understanding of Jesus, so how did he bridge into what they already knew? What was the result of this strategy?

➤ **Paul in Jerusalem.** Read Acts 21:37-22:2, Acts 22:22-29, Acts 23:6-10.

- The audience Paul spoke to consisted of Jews who were in Jerusalem. Paul spoke in Greek to the Roman tribunes, and since Paul was a Roman citizen, he used his authority as a Roman to speak freely. But to the Jews, he spoke in Hebrew, their own language.
- This strategy of Paul was risky – but what was the result? Would the result have been the same if he had not spoken to the people in their own language?



➤ **Paul speaks before King Agrippa.** Read Acts 26.

- Here Paul is speaking to a King and educated nobility, but he is using a different method than we have seen him use before in this lesson. What method does Paul use – and what was the result?

When speaking before a king, he shared his own testimony, which could not be refuted, rather than arguing from philosophy or scriptures. He was respectful and used language appropriate for the royal audience. Because of his testimony, all who were sitting with the King heard the Gospel!

❖ **Barriers to Communication:** There are many barriers to effective cross-cultural communication which we must be aware of.

- **Culture:** Paul was sensitive to the culture of those he was preaching to. He used culturally relevant examples, mentioned cultural icons, and used common idioms to connect with his audience.
- **Language:** Paul was able to speak in multiple languages, and used the appropriate one for his audience. He also changed the way he spoke depending on who he was addressing. The way we use language for children or elders may be different.
- **Literacy:** A large number of people in our world today rely on receiving information orally, rather than reading. Some people prefer to read material, some prefer to hear it, and some will need to discuss it to understand. Literate groups will process information differently than oral learners. Be aware of the literacy level or learning preference of your audience. That will determine what access they have to reading materials and the Bible, but also how they remember and process information.
 - **Oral communicators** learn not only by hearing, but also by observing and imitating. They discuss events; they use tradition and stories to remember events. Communicating through stories, songs, dialogue, and art forms (such as music, drama or film) are more likely to connect with oral learners or the illiterate.
 - **Highly literate people** will be more comfortable with factual presentations, and prefer to read, study, analyze information, and discuss words, concepts, and principles.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Jesus was an effective communicator who connected with His audience in a number of ways – especially by making a personal connection.
- ❖ Paul was a very effective communicator, and spoke to many different types of audiences. We can learn from his example.
- ❖ When speaking with people of different faiths, he used examples to show how God was superior to their idols.
- ❖ When speaking to educated Greek philosophers, Paul started with philosophical arguments and ideas they were already familiar with.
- ❖ When speaking to Jews in a synagogue, Paul reasoned with them from the Old Testament scriptures.
- ❖ When speaking to Romans and Jews in Jerusalem, Paul made use of his Roman citizenship and his knowledge of the Jewish language.
- ❖ When speaking to a King, Paul used his own testimony to present the Gospel, using terminology that was appropriate and respectful.
- ❖ We should be mindful of barriers to communication that we may face – such as language, culture, and levels of literacy. Our message must be presented in a way that best meets the needs of the audience.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can there be language barriers between people who speak the same language? What might some of them be? Are there differing worldviews within your own neighbourhood? Within your family?
2. A captive audience is not enough to assess whether the Gospel message has been delivered effectively. The only way we can measure effectiveness is by observing changed practices and behaviour in those who receive the Good News. What ways can we assess these changes in people who have heard the Gospel? What changes should we expect to see?
3. Paul had a unique opportunity to minister because of his citizenship, spiritual and cultural upbringing, languages spoken, and time available. How has God equipped you in a special way to be a messenger of the Gospel? Are there groups, cultures or languages you are uniquely able to minister to?